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Contact: Karen Pedevilla 800.622.4845 ext. 452

Indiana Protection and Advocacy Services Commission Files Complaint Against Amtrak

*IPAS filed a disability discrimination complaint against Amtrak with the United States
Department of Justice (USDOJ)*

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana Protection and Advocacy Services Commission (IPAS) is the state's protection and advocacy system whose objective is to protect and promote the rights of individuals with disabilities through empowerment and advocacy. IPAS, in coordination with the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) and 24 other protection and advocacy systems around the nation, set out to survey Amtrak train stations for accessibility compliance. After the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, Amtrak was given 20 years to come into compliance with the ADA because it was logical that the time and resources required to update the system were extensive.

Twenty-three years later, NDRN's national review found that 95 percent of surveyed stations had barriers to accessibility, in violation of the ADA. IPAS surveyed all 11 stations in Indiana, located in Connersville, Crawfordsville, Dyer, Elkhart, Hammond, Indianapolis, Lafayette, Michigan City, Rensselaer, South Bend, and Waterloo. IPAS found accessibility concerns at every station.

"If you are a person with a disability who wishes to travel on Amtrak, the message is pretty clear: you are not welcome here," said Curt Decker, NDRN's executive director.

The barriers found during the reviews include things like stairways with no ramp or elevator alternative, restrooms that were too narrow for people using mobility devices to access, ticket counters that were too high for people using wheelchairs to reach, parking lots with poorly marked, disintegrating or inequitable accessible spaces and platforms that were not level with the trains.

Following the nationwide project, NDRN released a report called "All Aboard (Except People with Disabilities)." It contains a full review of Amtrak's non-compliance with the ADA, state-by-state findings of the reviews and recommendations for Amtrak, Congress and the Administration.

As a result of the Indiana findings, IPAS filed a disability discrimination complaint against Amtrak with the United States Department of Justice (USDOJ), the federal agency responsible for enforcement of the ADA. IPAS requested that the USDOJ fully investigate the compliance issues and ensure that Amtrak make the necessary changes to stations in Indiana to become fully accessible to individuals with disabilities.

"People with disabilities have been very patient with Amtrak and IPAS believes that enough is enough; 23 years is a long time for individuals with disabilities to wait for equal access", IPAS Executive Director, Gary Richter.

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